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YOGA EDGING CLOSER TO BECOMING PART OF ASIAD

Yoga may feature in the marquee sporting event according to Indian authorities who are in touch with Olympic Council of Asia...

OCA GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S VOTE PENDING

Indian Olympic Association president, P T Usha, on Monday said the OCA's Executive Board has agreed to include yoga and a confirmation from the OCA's General Assembly would pave the way for its inclusion to the event's programme. Usha said OCA acting president, Randhir Singh, informed her about EB's decision

INDIA'S BID BACKED BY PROMINENT FIGURES

- Usha, in a release, thanked sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya, who had earlier welcomed her initiative to get yoga included. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also been a big advocate of yoga
- The ministry has already granted recognition to Yogasana Bharat for promotion and development of Yogasana as a competitive sport

2026

THE YEAR THE NEXT ASIAD WILL BE CONDUCTED

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

ST CORPORATION SCAM

Ex-min's close aide moved ₹94.73 cr into accounts of fake firms

YATHIRAJU @ Bengaluru

THE ongoing investigation by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) into the multi-crore scam in Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Ltd revealed that accused Nekunti Nagaraj (46), who is said to be a close aide of former minister for Tribal Welfare B Nagendra played a key role in the case. Named accused No. 10, Nagaraj allegedly illegally transferred Rs 94.73 crore from the corporation to various bank accounts of multiple fake companies.

Nagaraj was arrested by the CID on June 4 and remanded to judicial custody on June 18. He had allegedly actively taken part in the affairs of the Corporation and collected gold from some jewellery shops in lieu of the funds transferred into various bank accounts.

He had allegedly joined hands with Sathyanarayan, who is also arrested in connection with the scam that came to light when corporation's Accounts Officer Chandrashekar died by suicide.

The CID, in its objections to Nagaraj's bail petition, stated that the investigation is underway to ascertain who got those gold ornaments from Nagaraj. He is said to have deposited the money drawn from the Corporation's account and the gold into the accounts of unknown persons, who are yet to be identified, it added.

CID said it is investigating how the money was transferred from the corporation's bank account in the Vasanath Nagar branch of Union Bank of India to MG Road branch by putting pressure on the corporation Managing Director Padmanabh and Accounts Officer Parashuram allegedly through the minister.

The CID stated that the probe is on to know who mediated to get the seals, fake signatures and letterheads.

CONTINUED ON: P4

Rahul's fiery debut speech

Attacks BJP, saying its leaders are not Hindus; hits out at Agniveer scheme, NEET

Rahul Gandhi (left) gestures during his debut speech as Leader of Opposition; and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in one of his two interventions during the address, in the Lok Sabha on Monday | PTI

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE Lok Sabha witnessed a massive showdown on Monday after Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi launched a blistering attack on the BJP in his debut speech, saying the leaders of the ruling party are not Hindus as they engage in "violence and hate" round the clock.

The remark prompted sharp responses from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, accusing Rahul of portraying the entire Hindu community as violent.

In his speech that lasted nearly two hours, the Congress leader hit out at the government over a range of issues – from NEET to Agniveer to farm distress, unemployment and inflation among others.

Alleging that the BJP was instilling fear in all sections of society, Rahul invoked Lord Shiva and the teachings of Guru Nanak, Jesus Christ, Buddha and Mahavir to drive home the point that all religions preach, 'don't be scared, and do not scare others".

"Lord Shiva says 'don't be scared,' shows the *abhaya mudra*, talks about *ahimsa*, but those who call themselves Hindus indulge in hatred, violence and untruths round the clock," he alleged, pointing towards the BJP MPs.

As the Treasury benches erupted in protest, Shah demanded an apology for hurting the sentiments of the Hindu community. An unfazed Rahul, however, hit back saying he was speaking about the BJP and neither the ruling party nor the RSS represent the entire Hindu society. "You are not Hindus. It is clearly written in Hinduism that one should stand with the truth and not back down from the truth or be scared of it," he said.

Taking potshots at the BJP over its defeat in Ayodhya after the Ram temple inauguration, Rahul said the voters have conveyed a clear message to the government for its failures. Holding the government responsible for the unrest in Manipur, he said the prime minister and home minister have totally neglected the state.

He also accused the BJP of threatening the minorities and spreading hatred and violence against them.

Referring to the NEET-UG row, Rahul said students do not believe in the exam because they feel it is for the rich and that there is no place in it for meritorious students.

MULTIPLE BREAKS

Rahul had to stop his speech several times as ministers Amit Shah, Rijiju, Bhupender Yadav and others made interventions. As he held up a picture of Lord Shiva, Speaker Birla said rules do not allow placards in the House

When Hemant Soren or Arvind Kejriwal goes to jail, I should be concerned. When you unleash enforcement agencies on them, we should defend them. When you are a constitutional person, your personal aspirations should take a back seat

Rahul Gandhi on his new role

MODI MAKES TWO INTERVENTIONS; BJP SEEKS APOLOGY

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

BJP leaders on Monday launched a barrage of criticism both inside and outside Parliament against Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi for alleging they are not Hindus as they promote division and violence.

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his first intervention in the debate said Rahul calling the entire Hindu society violent was a serious matter, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and other ministers demanded an apology from the Congress leader. In his second intervention during Rahul's speech, Modi said the Constitution has taught him to take the LoP seriously.

Referring to the Agniveer scheme, Rahul described how the family of a martyr is deprived of compensation from the Army. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh rebutted him by pointing out that an Agniveer who lays down his life in the line of duty gets a compensation of ₹1 crore. "This House is not for spreading lies. Rahul Gandhi should apologise to the House, to the country and to Agniveers," Shah said.

MSP Issue

When Rahul alleged that the govt did not want to give a legal guarantee on MSP, agriculture minister Shivraj Chouhan accused him of misleading the House

Later, Union ministers Kiren Rijiju and Ashwini Vaishnaw did a media briefing and accused Rahul of denigrating the LoP post with his "utterly irresponsible" speech. Vaishnaw joined issue with Rahul who alleged that adequate compensation was not paid to the relocated shopkeepers in Ayodhya. "The state government and the administration provided ₹1,253 crore in compensation to 4,215 affected shopkeepers," he claimed.

Vaishnaw accused Rahul of insulting Hindus. "This is an old habit of the Congress. In 2010, P Chidambaram called Hindus terrorists, and in 2013, Sushil Shinde repeated it," he alleged.

Rijiju stated that the BJP has contested many of Rahul's claims and has requested action from the Speaker. "He will have to substantiate or apologise." Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also alleged that the appeasement politics of the Congress and Rahul "starts and ends with Hindu hate".

PANEL FORMED

Govt may not fill post of Dy Speaker

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

AS uncertainty over the appointment of the deputy speaker post of the Lok Sabha continues, sources said the government is unlikely to move in this direction soon. The NDA is keeping the cards close to its chest on whether to keep the post or allot it to an INDIA bloc candidate. However, Speaker Om Birla's move on Monday to appoint a panel of chairpersons to help him run the House proceedings shows the government does not want to appoint a deputy speaker, sources said.

Addressing the House on Monday, Birla said he has named Jagdambika Pal (BJP), P C Mohan (BJP), Sandhya Ray (BJP), Dilip Saikia (BJP), Kumari Selja (Congress), A Raja (DMK), Dr Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar (TMC), Krishna Prasad Tenneti (TDP), and Awadhesh Prasad (SP) as members of the panel of chairpersons. This comes amid speculation that the INDIA bloc has reached a consensus over fielding Prasad, the Faizabad MP, for the deputy speaker post. Sources said if INDIA bloc puts up Prasad as its candidate, the BJP will find it difficult to oppose.

According to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha, these chairpersons preside over House proceedings when the Speaker is not in the Chair. They enjoy all powers vested in the Speaker.

By fielding Prasad, the Opposition is trying to send a message to the Dalit voters in Uttar Pradesh. "The government may not wish to send a wrong message by opposing Prasad's candidature," said an NDA leader.

4 chilli farmers attempt suicide in Ballari district

KIRAN BALANNANAVAR @ Ballari

FOUR chilli farmers attempted suicide at Somasamudra village in Kurugodu taluk of Ballari district on Sunday after a private company which had purchased their produce has not cleared their payments for the last one-and-a-half years.

The four – Rudresh (55), Hanumanth (40), Shekar (45) and Kunesh (50) – consumed poison, while protesting along with other farmers against delayed payments.

They were admitted to Vijayanagara Institute of Medical Science, where their condition is stable.

Farmers said Bengaluru-based Agrigreed Pvt Ltd had bought chillies worth Rs 1.9 crore from 100 farmers.

CONTINUED ON: P5

Medha Patkar gets 5-month jail in 23-yr-old case

SUCHITRA MOHANTY @ New Delhi

A Delhi court on Monday sentenced social activist Medha Patkar to five months in jail in a 23-year-old defamation case brought against her by Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena.

The Metropolitan Magistrate Court also asked Patkar to pay ₹10 lakh as compensation to Saxena. In 2000, Saxena, who was then the president of Ahmedabad-based NGO, National Council for Civil Liberties, published an advertisement against the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) led by Patkar. The NBA was opposing the construction of dams on the Narmada.

Responding to the ad, Patkar issued a press note saying Saxena was "mortgaging" the people of Gujarat and their resources before Bill Gates and the then World Bank president James Wolfensohn. Her press note also called Saxena a Gujarat government agent.

Saxena filed a defamation suit against her in 2001. "It is evident that the accused (Patkar) harbored a clear intention to defame the complainant through her press note," the Delhi court said in its verdict.

Rejecting Patkar's prayer to release her on probation, the magistrate said, "Considering the facts...damages, age and ailment, I am not inclined to give excessive punishment." The court, however, suspended the sentence for a month to enable her to file an appeal.

First murder case under new law booked in Hassan

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Hassan/Bengaluru

THE first murder case in the state under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the new criminal law that came into force on Monday, was booked against a police constable in Hassan district. The first accident case under the new law too was registered in Hassan district, while in Bengaluru, the death of a 30-year-old homemaker in HSR Layout police limits was the first case registered under the new law.

Hassan city police booked Loknath, a police constable of Shantigrama police station, under Sections 85 (cruelty by husband), 103 (murder) and 3 (5) (common intention) of BNS for murdering his wife Mamata (40) by stabbing her in the chest and stomach on the premises of SP's office on Monday afternoon. Mamata had come to the SP office to give a complaint against Loknath for allegedly torturing her over family matters. Loknath, who had come there earlier, was reportedly watching her. When he attacked Mamata and she started screaming, some police constables near the office rushed to the spot. By then, Loknath had stabbed Mamata twice. She ran for 20 yards and then collapsed. The policemen caught Loknath and shifted Mamata to the Hassan Institute of Medical Sciences, where doctors declared her brought dead.

Constable Loknath (left) who allegedly murdered his wife, Mamata

SP Mohamed Sujeeta said Loknath had a rift with Mamata over family and property issues and often quarrelled with her. Lokanath and Mamata married 14 years ago and have two children.

In Halebid, the police registered a case under Section 173 of BNS against Sagar, a car driver, who crashed his vehicle into another car that fell into a ditch killing Indu (67).

In Bengaluru, the suspicious death of a 30-year-old homemaker in HSR Layout police limits is said to be the first complaint registered under the new laws. The victim was found lying unconscious in the house by her father-in-law.

P5

WC CHESS

INDIA NOT TO HOST

The International Chess Federation said that Singapore will be hosting the event, where D Gukesh will be taking on defending champ Ding Liren | P13

ROAD TO PARIS

Trekking in Swiss — Hockey team's Oly prep

SWAROOP SWAMINATHAN
@ Bengaluru

IN a week's time, the Indian men's hockey team will throw away their sports gear for some jackets, headlamps and hiking boots. As part of a team bonding exercise before the high-pressure environment of the Olympics, the contingent — the playing members and the support staff — will meet up with the side's mental conditioning coach, Paddy Upton, in Switzerland for a three-day camp.

"There will be no hockey there," Craig Fulton, coach of the national team, said during an interaction with this daily. "Everything that we need to focus on to be the best team we can be. Most have a good time doing it because it's been tough, training really hard. Sometimes, we also need to see the wood for the trees (laughs). The mountains could be what we need."

The men's team is scheduled to reach Paris on July 20 | HOCKEY INDIA

While there, the plan right now is to do some trekking before 2021 bronze medallists switch base to Netherlands for three friendlies before they leave for Paris on July 20.

The three-day session could also see the side have a spell with Mike Horn, a motivational coach who has worked with the Indian cricket, the Germany men's football team as well as Kolkata Knight Riders in the Indian Premier League. Doing these sort of team exercises is nothing new for Fulton's wards. Last year, they climbed Table Mountain. Before the Asian Games, the players were split into small teams and were asked to shoot short movies (movies were shot on a mobile camera before they were screened).

P R Sreejesh, who will be featuring in his fourth Olympics, spoke about why these exercises are vital. "Climbing the Table Mountain was a good experience," he said. "Different people had different goals; somebody wanted to finish first, a few just wanted to finish, others wanted to come last so they could motivate everybody else to finish. It was about showing mentality."

On the upcoming trip to Switzerland, Sreejesh said: "We are going to meet Mike Horn (Horn had taken the South African men's cricket team on an expedition to the Swiss Alps in 2012), I have read about his work in Paddy Upton's autobiography. That was so inspiring and I'm sure his lessons will help us at the Olympics. When you feel like you are breaking down or the team is breaking down, his experiences will help us make good decisions under those circumstances.

"It will be something new for us but that's what we require, we need to distract ourselves. Three days doing this before coming back to hockey will refresh us."

Indian civilian to get seat on next Blue Origin flight

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

WHILE an Indian astronaut is being trained by the US to land on the Moon at the International Space Centre, the Space Exploration and Research Agency (SERA), in collaboration with Blue Origin, has announced India as a partner nation in their human spaceflight programme for citizens from countries who have sent few or no astronauts to space.

An Indian citizen will get a seat among the six on a future mission of New Shepard, Blue Origin's reusable suborbital rocket that will fly out of West Texas. Recently, Gopichand Thotakura made history as the second Indian to go to space.

New Shepard will fly the selected astronauts on an 11-minute journey past the Kármán line (100 km), the internationally recognized boundary of space. Astronauts will experience several minutes of weightlessness before making a controlled descent back to the landing pad.

"We're excited to have India as part of our human spaceflight program. India has achieved remarkable milestones in its space journey in the past few years, including becoming the first country to reach the Moon's southern pole. We want to make space accessible for everyone and are happy to offer this unique opportunity to an Indian citizen who wants to experience the wonders of space travel," said Joshua Skurla, Co-Founder, SERA.

P5